

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

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SUBJECT: INQUIRIES IN MARTINIQUE AND GUADELOUPE ABOUT U.S.
FLAG AIRLINE SERVICES

REF: 75 MARTINIQUE A-63, 75 MARTINIQUE A-31

1. DURING A RECENT TRIP TO GUADELOUPE, THE REPORTING OFFICER AGAIN ENCOUNTERED INQUIRIES FROM A LARGE NUMBER OF OFFICIALS AND PRIVATE BUSINESSMEN ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR MORE U.S. FLAG CARRIER FLIGHTS FROM THE U.S. TO THE FRENCH ANTILLES. THE INQUIRIES, AND SIMILAR ONES IN MARTINIQUE WERE PROMPTED BY UNOFFICIAL REPORTS THAT A RECENT VISIT TO THE U.S. BY FRENCH STATE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORTATION, SEEKING A REPLACEMENT FOR PAN AM S DISCONTINUED SERVICES TO THE ANTILLES, WAS NOT SUCCESSFUL.

2. RECENTLY, SOME OF THE CONCERNS ONE NORMALLY HEARS IN MARTINIQUE AND GUADELOUPE ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR THE TOURIST INDUSTRY HAVE BEEN MUTED. AT THE MOMENT, THINGS LOOK WELL FOR TOURIST TRADE AND MANY HOTELS HAVE BEEN BOOKED THROUGH FEBRUARY AND INTO MARCH. IN FACT THE SEASON MAY BE OFF TO SUCH A GOOD START THAT SOME HOTELS WILL SHOW A PROFITABLE YEAR FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE RECENT PAST. NEVERTHELESS, GUADELOUPE, WITH SOME 1500 NEW HOTEL BEDS, HAS ALMOST TIED ITS WHOLE FUTURE TO THE TOURIST TRADE, AND IT WILL FACE A SERIOUS ECONOMIC SETBACK IF ITS TOURIST DEVELOPMENT PLANS FAIL. IN SOME RESPECTS, MARTINIQUE S PICTURE IS A DARK ONE. THE 125 BED DIAMOND ROC HOTEL REMAINS CLOSED, THE FORMER HILTON HAS STILL FOUND NO OPERATORS AND

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THE CAP EST HOTEL REMAINS CLOSED. DESPITE A TEMPORARILY BRIGHT

PICTURE, THERE IS STILL LITTLE ROOM FOR OPTIMISM OVER THE LONG TERM ABOUT TOURISM IN THE FRENCH ANTILLES.

3. THE CONSULATE HAS PRESSED THE POINT THAT WE HAVE A CLEAR STAKE IN SEEING A FLOURISHING TOURIST TRADE DEVELOP HERE. GUADELOUPE AND MARTINIQUE HAVE FEW RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND WE ARE CONCERNED THAT WITHOUT A GROWING ECONOMY, THE TWO ISLANDS MAY EVENTUALLY EXPERIENCE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL UNREST. DESPITE THE FAVORABLE SHOWING THE TOURIST TRADE IS MAKING THIS WINTER, WE SHOULD DO WHAT WE CAN TO AID THE DEVELOPMENT OF A THRIVING AND SUCCESSFUL TOURIST INDUSTRY IN THIS PART OF THE CARIBBEAN. SPECIFICALLY, THE USG SHOULD SUPPORT MORE U.S CARRIER FLIGHTS, SCHEDULED OR CHARTER, TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR MORE U.S. CITIZENS TO TRAVEL TO THIS PART OF THE CARIBBEAN. THIS WILL COST US LITTLE, AND A PROSPECTIVE RESULT WILL BE MORE STABLE ISLAND ECONOMIES IN THE FRENCH ANTILLES. IF A TOURISM INDUSTRY HERE DOES NOT DEVELOP, ESPECIALLY IF OTHER DEVELOPMENT PLANS ALSO FAIL, WE FACE THE ALL TOO REAL PROSPECTS OF DETERIORATING ISLAND ECONOMIES AND UNSTABLE POLITICAL CONDITIONS ON OUR CARIBBEAN DOORSTEP.

4. IN VIEW OF WIDESPREAD INTERESTS IN U.S. FLAG AIRLINE SERVICE WE WOULD APPRECIATE A BRIEF UNCLASSIFIED RUNDOWN ON PROSPECTS FOR MORE U.S. AIR SERVICE, PARTICULARLY, WHETHER ANY AIRLINE MIGHT SOON TAKE OVER THE DISCONTINUED PAN AM SERVICES. SHACKLETON

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